

# Sitka National Historical Park Archaeological Survey Project

Newsletter 1



August 1, 2005

This week marked the start of a long awaited four-year archaeological survey of Sitka National Historical Park. You are receiving this newsletter because the park is offering periodic informal notices to keep people informed about the project. If you are not interested, or would prefer to receive information by regular mail, please respond to the address below.

## **Why Survey?**

Archaeological survey is specialized fieldwork designed to locate and identify cultural sites. It is important because this knowledge helps parks preserve, protect and interpret the cultural resources they care for. Although there was a limited archaeological excavation of the area of the Tlingit fort done in the 1950s, this project is the park's first formal survey. The goal of the project is to provide information about the full range of time periods in the park's history, from the prehistoric era to WWII, with special interest in locations associated with the Tlingit-Russian 1804 Battle, one of Alaska's most significant historical events.

## **Who Is Doing the Work?**

The park enlisted the National Park Service's well known Midwest Archaeological Center to conduct the project. The center is located in Lincoln, Nebraska and has been involved in important projects around

the United States. Their website at [www.cr.nps.gov/mwac](http://www.cr.nps.gov/mwac) describes their work and biographies of staff. The crew during this phase consists of Bill Hunt (heading up the project), Doug Scott, and Steve DeVore. They are being assisted by Melissa Connor, Charlie Haecker (National Park Service, Santa Fe), and Chris Adams (USDA Forest Service, Albuquerque). Later issues of this newsletter will describe some of the equipment and strategies the archaeologists will use during the survey.

Four local students have been hired as archaeological assistants: James Craig, Jessie Marquez-Hopson, Sean Griffin and Alan Carper. Deirdre LaBounty is assisting as a volunteer. Woody Widmark and his crew of 9 -14 year old S.C.O.R.E. students assisted the project by clearing brush.



**Excavating shovel tests in Sitka  
National Historical Park**

## **Project Activities**

This week one crew began excavating a series of small shovel tests spaced along an established grid system, sifting the excavated dirt through screens to locate artifacts. Other crews recorded the presence of artifacts and features with metal detectors and ground penetrating radar. In spite of the very preliminary nature of the work so far the archaeologists have located a range of cultural material including cannon balls and cannister shot, stone flakes associated with prehistoric chipped stone tools, and fragments of iron that may have come from historic homestead activity in the mid-1800s.

## **Communications**

Communications with the tribal community began in the planning stages of the project. Jessica Perkins and Steve Johnson Jr. are acting as cultural liaisons for the project. In June Park staff met with the Kiks.ádi clan and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Cultural

Committee to discuss the project. On July 27<sup>th</sup> the Cultural Committee held a meeting at the park as a way to meet the archaeologists, discuss concerns, and share information that will make the project successful.

## **Visiting the Project**

Beginning August 1, the park will offer ranger-guided walks out to the work areas with an opportunity to talk with the archaeologists. Next week's walks will take place Wednesday and Friday at 3:00. They will start at the Visitor Center.

## **Protecting Archaeological Sites**

Archaeological resources are fragile and irreplaceable. It is a violation of federal law to collect artifacts or disturb archaeological sites in National Parks. Possession or use of metal detecting equipment in National parks, outside of sanctioned research, is prohibited.



**Archaeologists using remote sensing equipment**

**For More Information:** For information about this newsletter contact Kristen Griffin at (907)747-0132 or [kristen\\_griffin@nps.gov](mailto:kristen_griffin@nps.gov). For information about the project, contact Bill Hunt at [bill\\_hunt@nps.gov](mailto:bill_hunt@nps.gov) or Gene Griffin at (907)747-0140 or [gene\\_griffin@nps.gov](mailto:gene_griffin@nps.gov). For more information about Sitka National Historical Park, contact the park at (907)747-0110 or visit the park webpage at [www.nps.gov/sitk](http://www.nps.gov/sitk).